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Chair: Mr. Bowler (Malawi)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/70/133, A/70/312, A/70/341, A/70/351, A/70/406, A/70/406/Corr.1 and A/70/421)

1. Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and introducing its report (A/70/406) examining the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, said that the report contained information gathered during the Special Committee's visit to Amman in 2015. Regrettably, the Government of Israel, as in previous years, had failed to respond to requests to meet with the Special Committee and allow access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During the visit, the Special Committee had been briefed on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the occupied Syrian Golan by civil society representatives, victims and witnesses of Israeli violations, and Palestinian and United Nations officials. A number of concerns which constituted important elements of the background to the serious escalation of violence had been brought to the attention of the Special Committee.

2. Settlement activity had been continuing in both the Occupied Palestinian Territories — where expansion had been aided and abetted by restrictive planning policies for Palestinians, demolition orders on "illegal" Palestinian homes, settler violence, and legislation to confiscate private Palestinian property — and the occupied Syrian Golan, where financial incentives of up to \$12,000 were offered to Israeli families settling there for a minimum of five years. The Committee had been dismayed to hear that settler violence continued to be the daily Palestinian reality. The arson attack by settlers in Duma that had resulted in the death of an 18-month-old baby and his father, which had received international condemnation, had been but one emblematic incident in a widespread and continuing phenomenon. It had been evident from the testimonies that the root cause of the escalating violence was the continuing policy of settlement expansion and the climate of impunity relating to the activities of the settlers. There was only a slim chance

that a complaint filed by a Palestinian against Israeli settlers would lead to an effective investigation, with the identification of a suspect, followed by indictment, trial and conviction.

3. The report also cited disturbing testimony on numerous cases of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces, including with live ammunition. From January to August 2015, 18 Palestinians had reportedly been killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank; that number had more than tripled since then and excessive use of force by Israeli security forces had contributed to — and exacerbated — the spiralling cycle of deadly violence across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. There were moving accounts from young Palestinians who had been shot and injured while posing no danger to Israeli security forces. Other similar cases, including the more recent and all-too-frequent killings of Palestinians, raised serious questions regarding the guidelines and instructions issued by the Israeli authorities. In that regard, the Special Committee called on Israel to take immediate steps to ensure compliance with international standards for law enforcement and accountability for excessive use of force by Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Recent news reports indicated that fresh rounds of violence had resulted in death and injury to civilians on both sides.

4. The recent escalation in tensions surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque had also been brought to the attention of the Committee. Civil society representatives had noted that underlying the tensions were the entry restrictions imposed on Palestinians and provocation by Jewish people allowed entry to the Al-Aqsa compound. Concerns had also been expressed regarding archaeological excavation work undertaken around the site, in a reportedly deliberate attempt to undermine the structural foundations of the Mosque. The report called on Israel to lift all movement restrictions within East Jerusalem, and to cease immediately the potentially harmful excavation works beneath or near the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

5. The situation of Palestinian detainees remained a serious concern. In August 2015, an estimated 5,000 Palestinian detainees had been held in Israeli custody, including 160 minors, 26 women, and 7 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and 400 Palestinians were being held indefinitely under administrative detention without charge or trial. Administrative detention was only exceptionally permitted for short

periods of time under international law, but in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, it remained the norm. The Committee shared the concern of civil society that the 99 per cent conviction rate for Palestinians arrested by Israeli security forces cast doubt on the application of the principles of the presumption of innocence and due process. In most cases of arrest and detention of minors, the charges were alleged stone-throwing during demonstrations. Disturbingly, the recent amendment to the Penal Code increased the maximum sentence for throwing stones or other objects at vehicles from 10 to 20 years; the harsher sentences would likely affect Palestinian youth most. Ill-treatment, torture, and medical neglect of detainees, including women and children, remained a serious issue. Detainees had been subjected to regular beatings, electric shocks, solitary confinement, and the use of police dogs to intimidate and quell protests inside prisons. The Special Committee was also concerned by a number of measures adopted in 2015 that further undermined the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, such as a law permitting the force-feeding of prisoners on hunger strike and the approval by the Israeli Supreme Court of application of the Absentee Property Law of 1950, which provided for the confiscation of property and assets in occupied East Jerusalem when owners resided in the West Bank or Gaza.

6. As in previous years, the Special Committee had reported on the role of companies that did business with settlements and profited from their maintenance or construction or the exploitation of natural resources in the occupied West Bank or the occupied Syrian Golan. There was a growing awareness among companies of the potential financial, legal and reputational risks of doing business in occupied territories. Submissions made to the Committee listed a number of Israeli and international institutions, including banks. The Special Committee hoped to maintain the growing awareness among companies of the potential financial, legal and reputational risks of doing business in occupied territories. It also called upon Member States to review national policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures related to business activity to ensure that they effectively prevented and addressed the risk of human rights abuses in conflict-affected areas. The international community must also ensure that corporations respected human rights and ceased to fund or enter into commercial transactions with organizations and bodies

involved in settlements or exploitation of natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the occupied Syrian Golan.

7. The report also covered the situation in Gaza, including the lack of accountability and right to legal remedies, the enforcement of the access-restricted areas by Israeli security forces and the slow pace of reconstruction efforts following the hostilities in the summer of 2014. According to information received by the Special Committee, Israeli Naval Forces had fired live ammunition in 91 incidents, killing 14 Palestinian fishermen between January and June 2015 in access-restricted areas at sea. Fishermen had also reportedly been humiliated by being forced to undress and swim from their boats to naval vessels in order to be arrested. While the precise area of access-restricted areas both on land and at sea was unclear, up to 35 per cent of agricultural land in Gaza, and as much as 85 per cent of its fishing waters had been affected over time. Furthermore, one year after the deadly war in Gaza, reconstruction lagged considerably because of a lack of funds and the continuing Israeli blockade. As of August 2015, only one third of the \$4 billion pledged by the international community for the reconstruction of Gaza had been disbursed. Over 100,000 Palestinians remained displaced, living in precarious conditions with little access to basic services. The blockade of Gaza continued to be a key obstacle to the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights of Palestinians. It was imperative for the international community to use its influence to end the blockade and for donor countries to honour the pledges made and to disburse funds for reconstruction urgently.

8. The Special Committee had found that the human rights situation in the occupied territories continued to deteriorate. The stalled peace process, the issues already mentioned and the lack of opportunities for a better life had created an explosive mix, escalating the cycle of violence. Any attempt to calm the deadly tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the holy site, must be grounded in respect for human rights. Sustainable peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike could be achieved only if there was real accountability and the root causes of the conflict were addressed.

9. Mr. Radcliffe (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), introducing five reports of the Secretary-General under agenda item 55, said that the report on the work of the

Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/70/341) outlined the activities of the Special Committee and the Department of Public Information in support of the Special Committee's work.

10. The report on the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories (A/70/133) summarized the replies received from Brazil, Cuba, Ireland, Qatar, Switzerland and Turkey to a request for information on the steps taken or envisaged to implement General Assembly resolution 69/91. It included information on the Conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and the adoption of a ten-point declaration.

11. The report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/70/351) contained information from a variety of sources, including OHCHR and other United Nations entities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The report concluded that settlement-related activities were at the core of most of the human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and that settlement expansion, including through retroactive legalization of outposts under Israeli law and in stark contravention of international law, was a significant obstacle to the right to self-determination. The report also examined human rights violations linked to the settlements, and the detrimental impact of settlements on efforts towards sustainable peace on the basis of a two-State solution. It also included an update on Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Golan.

12. The report of the Secretary-General on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/70/421), focused on the increase in violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from June to August 2014; the situation in Gaza, one year after the ceasefire; the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; accountability; and treaty accession by the State of Palestine. The report covered the 2014 escalation of hostilities and violence in the West Bank and related human rights violations and

provided an overall picture of the scale of the ensuing destruction, displacement and humanitarian needs.

13. Lastly, the report on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/70/312) was a compilation of the replies received from the Syrian Arab Republic, Brazil and Cuba to a request for information on steps taken to implement General Assembly resolution 69/94.

14. Mr. Hamed (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the exploitation by Israel of natural resources in the occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, was in flagrant violation of international law and asked what Member States could do to implement the Special Committee's recommendations on that matter.

15. Mr. Suleman (Pakistan) asked whether the routine violent nocturnal searches and arrests continued in the Occupied Palestine Territory, including East Jerusalem, where Israeli Forces had been documented breaking into homes and physically restraining and blindfolding innocent Palestinians, including children, to take them away for detention. Many had testified to the trauma and loss of dignity related to such raids and subsequent interrogations, during which police dogs and weapons were used. He asked the Chair of the Special Committee to elaborate on the physical and psychological effects of those raids, in particular on innocent women and children.

16. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the many reports by United Nations entities attested to a systematic pattern of gross human rights violations being perpetrated by the occupying Power, its occupying forces and settlers against the Palestinian people over close to fifty years of foreign military occupation, itself deemed a massive human rights violation that should be considered illegal in its entirety. Israel continued its abhorrent practice of forcibly detaining, interrogating and imprisoning Palestinian children, including boys as young as fourteen years old, and was the only country to prosecute children in military courts. She asked what specific observations the Special Committee had made regarding that illegal practice — an issue already raised by the Special Committee and other United Nations bodies — and whether it had any recommendations for a remedy.

17. Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee, recalled that in chapter V of its report (A/70/406), the Special Committee had

proposed a number of recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly. Furthermore, in paragraph 89 the Special Committee called on the international community to undertake certain measures. With regard to the use of resources by corporations and entities within occupied territories, the Special Committee had given due attention to the detailed written and oral testimony it had received on the matter and the relevant recommendations were found in paragraphs 89 (e) and (f). The Special Committee shared the concerns on the issue of night-time raids — in particular their impact on women and children, which was reflected in school drop-out rates — and had made a recommendation in paragraph 89 (k). With regard to the continuing forcible detention of Palestinians, the Special Committee had dealt with that issue extensively in paragraphs 50 to 57 of the report and the related recommendations were contained in paragraph 88 (m).

18. Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that there was a human rights crisis in Palestine, as affirmed by documented facts and countless reports by the United Nations and other international organizations monitoring the situation on the objective basis of international law. Every aspect of life was infringed upon and every human right was being violated as Israel continued to subjugate the Palestinian people and entrench its occupation. The campaign of military aggression, detention and forced displacement of civilians, destruction and confiscation of homes and land, and the rabid construction and expansion of settlements, movement restrictions, evictions, exploitation of natural resources and provocation concerning the Haram al-Sharif sought to deny systematically the history, rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people, while criminalizing their legitimate resistance to occupation. Those actions aimed, unsuccessfully, to legitimize the blatantly illegal occupation, exacerbating prejudice, paranoia, and extremism and undermining peace as well as international law and the international system as a whole.

19. Israeli human rights violations had intensified in 2015, with devastating consequences for Palestinian society. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, physically precluded the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Far from being de-escalated, the situation remained critical. The

cultivation of a culture of hate had been exhibited in the shameful words and actions of an Israeli soldier who had been filmed threatening to kill all residents in the Aida Palestine refugee camp in Bethlehem. Such shocking threats, used to subjugate and dispossess the Palestinian population in grave breach of international law, were not isolated. They were the same threats, policies and measures manifested in the routine intimidation and harassment of Palestinian civilians at checkpoints; in the forcible detention and inhumane treatment — even torture — of thousands of Palestinian prisoners, including children, in Israeli jails; and in the savagery of the war in Gaza in 2014, during which Israeli forces had slaughtered more than 2,000 Palestinians, among them hundreds of women and children, and deliberately destroyed homes and properties. They were the same threats, policies and measures that underpinned the illegal, inhumane blockade of Gaza, inflicting collective punishment on the entire civilian population there; that drove the illegal settlements and associated violations; and that fuelled religious provocation and settler violence, carried out with total impunity and with the protection and support of the Israeli Government and occupying forces.

20. The provisions of international law prohibiting all those actions were clear and were applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as confirmed by the General Assembly, Security Council, Human Rights Council and International Court of Justice, and the Conferences of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention. Attempts to dispute or distort those facts were directly negated by reality. Continued appeasement or silence could not be justified. Respect for human rights could not be conditioned on the resolution of conflict; they must be respected in all circumstances. Failure to hold Israel accountable for its human rights violations and crimes would only embolden it to continue trampling the law, causing more suffering, compounding the crisis, and making peace even more elusive. The international community must demand that Israel should cease its violations and comply with the law. For, while those illegal actions continued, how could Palestinians believe that Israel sought peace, would put an end to the illegal foreign occupation and was committed to the two-State solution? More than lip service, action was needed to answer those very real questions and prove the Israeli authorities' commitment.

21. Until the reality on the ground improved, her delegation would continue to call for international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international law, as their suffering was the direct result of Israeli occupation and occupiers. The international community, in particular the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, had clear responsibilities in that regard. The call for protection must not be viewed as unreasonable or unimaginable by any party that respected international law and human rights and sought peace. Citing the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who had called for protection for the people of the occupied territories at the 2001 Conference of High Contracting Parties, she said that that appeal remained applicable and indeed had become more urgent than ever. She implored the international community to rise to the challenge and act to protect innocent civilians, uphold human rights and salvage the prospects for a just and lasting peace.

22. Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement was deeply concerned that Israel had prevented the Special Committee from holding consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities and from gaining access to the occupied territories in line with its mandate. It strongly condemned the refusal of Israel to give the independent international commission of inquiry access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

23. The Movement condemned the continuing Israeli settlement construction throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around occupied East Jerusalem, which was a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and various United Nations resolutions. Those and other systematic violations, including the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians and incessant violence by Israeli settlers and extremists at sensitive religious sites and other locations, had worsened conditions on the ground. The abhorrent Israeli occupation, which remained one of the most destabilizing factors at the regional and global levels, must be ended.

24. The Special Committee's finding that the policies and practices of Israel continued to violate the fundamental human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under

occupation was a matter of serious concern. As a result of the war against Gaza in 2014, almost one third of the entire population of Gaza had been internally displaced. As at August 2015, approximately 100,000 Palestinians remained displaced and were living in precarious conditions in temporary accommodation. The Movement condemned the attacks by Israel against the Palestinian people, including the deadly aggression against the Gaza Strip in 2014, which had exacerbated the existing humanitarian crisis, and called on Israel to promptly and unconditionally end its illegal blockade of Gaza.

25. The Movement condemned the continued detention of a staggering number of Palestinian prisoners, many of whom were children and some of whom were detained without charge, in prisons and detention centres in Israel and the West Bank. As called for in the Declaration on Palestine Political Prisoners, adopted in August 2012 at the Sixteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, and as reiterated at the Seventeenth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, all such prisoners should be immediately released and their plight should be addressed by the international community.

26. Illegal Israeli settlement construction was proceeding apace across the West Bank, facilitated by other illegal measures, including land confiscation. Israeli provocation and incitement had intensified, in particular at holy sites, and settler violence continued to contribute to the displacement of Palestinians. Such activities undermined the contiguity of the West Bank and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and were destroying the two-State solution. The international community, notably the Security Council, must take urgent action to compel Israel to cease its settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and abide by all of its obligations under international law.

27. With reference to the Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirmed that all the unlawful actions committed by Israel constituted a clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel should abide by that resolution and withdraw completely to the borders of 4 June 1967.

28. The Movement reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, to the immediate restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in an independent State, and to a just solution for Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

29. Mr. Storaci (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the European Union remained committed to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution. There was no alternative to that solution, as a one-State reality was not compatible with the legitimate national aspirations of both the Israelis and the Palestinians. In the meantime, the European Union would continue to promote an agreement on substantial steps to improve the situation on the ground, preserve the viability of the two-State solution and build a path back to final status negotiations.

30. The European Union was extremely concerned at the escalation in violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and it condemned any violence against civilians and all acts of terror. All perpetrators of crimes or acts of terror must be brought to justice, and both Israelis and Palestinians had the right to live in peace and security. The response of security forces needed to be proportionate and consistent regardless of the identity of the perpetrators, and Israel must conduct a thorough investigation into cases in which lethal force had been used.

31. Amid recurring clashes at the Haram al-Sharif, or Temple Mount, the European Union renewed its appeal for full respect for holy sites and stressed that any change to the historic status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. While it welcomed the understandings reached between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, broader action was also needed, including tangible steps to preserve the viability of the two-State solution and lower the risk of violence. Jerusalem was a city sacred to three religions and the European Union had never recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. Genuine peace could be achieved only through negotiations to resolve the status of

Jerusalem as the future capital of two States, and the Israeli Government must cease all discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

32. Settlements were illegal under international law, constituted an obstacle to peace and threatened to make a two-State solution impossible. The Government of Israel must put an end to all settlement activity, including so-called "natural growth", in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and all outposts erected since March 2001 must be dismantled. The European Union was committed to ensuring full implementation of European Union legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products and to ensuring that all agreements between the State of Israel and the European Union explicitly indicated their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

33. The European Union was deeply concerned at the violence and incitement against Palestinians and Israelis, including settler extremism in the West Bank, and condemned settler violence and deliberate provocations against Palestinian civilians. A full and prompt investigation of all crimes committed by Israeli settlers must be conducted and the Israeli authorities should take measures to protect the local population. There should be full accountability, effective law enforcement and zero tolerance for settler violence, and Israel must vigorously address the perceived impunity for such violence by expediting investigations and prosecutions of those responsible.

34. The European Union was deeply concerned at the worsening living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C and at the demolitions, evictions and forced transfers, including of Bedouin communities. In that regard it recalled the applicability of international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The European Union had repeatedly expressed its concern at Israeli plans to "relocate" a number of Bedouin and herding communities from their current locations in the central West Bank, including in the strategic E1 area, and it called on the Israeli authorities to halt plans for the forced transfer of populations from the Susya and Abu Nwar communities. The Government of Israel must develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population. Accelerated Palestinian construction and the social and economic development of Area C would

strengthen the prosperity and security of both Israelis and Palestinians.

35. The humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza remained dire and addressing the root causes of that conflict must be an immediate priority for the parties concerned and the international community. The European Union welcomed the steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions in Gaza but considered that further positive measures were needed to enable the full delivery of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and economic recovery on a permanent basis. Crossing points must be fully opened and measures must be taken to address the legitimate security concerns of Israel. Rocket fire by militant groups was unacceptable and underlined the danger of escalation. All stakeholders must make a commitment to non-violence and peace.

36. Palestinian unity was fundamental to achieve a two-State solution and ensure security for all, and Palestinian factions must work towards reconciliation and the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza. The Palestinian Authority must take greater responsibility and assume its government function in the Gaza Strip. Compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by States and non-State actors, including through their acceptance of accountability, was a cornerstone for peace and security in the region.

37. Israel should cooperate fully with all special procedures established by the Human Rights Council, including by issuing a standing invitation to all of them, and should also cooperate fully with OHCHR on the ground. The European Union remained concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to administrative detention of excessive duration without charge and called on Israel to bring formal charges against individuals detained and ensure fair trials.

38. Furthermore, the European Union remained concerned at the high number of Palestinian children detained by Israel and the continuing reports of their ill treatment. It urged Israel to continue its cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to ensure that all gaps between policy and practice were bridged urgently and that the rights of children in Israeli military custody were upheld at all times. Military courts were no place for children and the detention of children should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time. In addition, children

must at all times be afforded the safeguards to which they were legally entitled. Lastly, the European Union was also concerned at the continuing incursions by Israeli forces into Area A, which jeopardized the internationally recognized success of Palestinian efforts at institution-building. It was especially concerned about night incursions and their possible impact on children and other vulnerable persons, and recalled the recommendation by UNICEF that all arrests of children should be conducted during daylight, notwithstanding exceptional and grave situations.

39. Mr. Adam (Sudan) said that the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had deteriorated so much over the last year that it was on the brink of crisis. Israeli forces had destroyed homes, displaced their inhabitants, arbitrarily arrested defenceless Palestinian civilians, often using excessive force, and subjected them to torture and detention without trial, all of which was in gross violation of international law.

40. The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and other areas had turned the Occupied Palestinian Territories into a vast prison where living conditions were abysmal, unemployment was on the rise and essential supplies such as food, medicine and clothing were scarce. Such dire conditions risked leading to a rise in criminal activity as people struggled for survival.

41. The Sudan condemned Israel's illegal practices against the people of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories and supported the legitimate claim of Palestine to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and ensure the return of Palestine refugees to their homes. His delegation urged the international community to put an end to Israel's persistent violations of international law and implement all international agreements pertaining to the question of Palestine. Those efforts should lead to Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

42. Mr. Hamed (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the international community had failed to take any genuine action to end the prolonged occupation by Israel of Arab lands, despite the fact that Israel had openly rejected the two-State solution and had repeatedly committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. While Israel carried out daily attempts to alter the character of Christian and Muslim holy sites and

continued its rapid expansion of Israeli settlements, which were universally recognized — even by its most loyal supporter — to be illegal and constitute an obstacle to peace, the United Nations had turned a blind eye to the situation and failed to impose sanctions of any kind on Israel. The Organization's continued failure to act would undermine its credibility and lead to catastrophic consequences in the region.

43. In the Syrian Golan, the Israeli authorities continued to carry out systematic human rights violations that included racial discrimination and arbitrary arrest, including the re-arrest of a Syrian activist who had already spent years in prison for having exposed Israeli support for terrorists in the area of separation in the Syrian Golan. Israel also refused to provide international organizations with maps of the minefields it had sown and continued its theft of natural resources, including water and oil.

44. His delegation recalled that the decision by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Golan had been declared null and void and without international legal effect by Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and urged the international community to take immediate action to end to that country's flagrant violations of international law in the occupied Syrian Golan and have it withdraw to the 1967 borders. He expressed support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/70/406), in particular regarding the need for the adoption of appropriate measures to prevent, investigate, punish and provide redress for corporate exploitation of resources in the occupied territories and the Committee's call to Member States to refrain from dealing with organizations and bodies involved in settlements or exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories.

45. Ms. Sughayar (Jordan) said that the continued illegal practices and oppression by Israel against the Palestinian people would only lead to increased retaliation and fortify the Palestinian resistance. Decades of experience had shown that the use of force served to exacerbate conflict, deepen divisions and spread a culture of hatred, as demonstrated on a daily basis by the aggressive, racist practices of Israeli settlers.

46. Systematic violations of international law by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including construction of the separation wall, land confiscation,

house demolitions, forced displacement, exploitation of natural resources and settlement expansion, would continue unless Israel was held accountable for its actions.

47. The international community must work collectively to end the Israeli occupation, which was the underlying cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and provide legal protection to the Palestinian people in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. Her Government called on Israel, which to date had taken no credible steps to build confidence or create a favourable environment for peace talks, to prove its stated commitment to the peace process by ceasing all aggression against the Palestinians and entering into genuine negotiations to achieve peace, security and stability in the interests of both parties to the conflict.

48. Palestinian children were denied the education and leisure opportunities enjoyed by Israeli children and were instead subjected to daily persecution, attacks and provocation by Israeli extremists and authorities, in addition to long delays at checkpoints, which meant that journeys that should take a few minutes often took many hours. While Israelis received military training from a young age, young Palestinians were simply brought up in the knowledge that the Israeli occupation must end.

49. In Jerusalem, at the holy site of the Haram al-Sharif, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Palestinians faced long-standing restrictions on their freedom of worship, violent attacks by settlers who acted with police protection, and persistent attempts by Israel to change the historic status of the site. Jordan had a legal and historical right to protect the historic character of the Haram al-Sharif and would continue to do so using all diplomatic, political and legal means at its disposal. Her Government strongly condemned the flagrant violations by Israel of Palestinians' freedom of worship, which stoked tensions in Jerusalem and undermined efforts to reach a two-State solution.

50. Jordan remained a staunch supporter of the legitimate and inalienable rights of Palestinians and would continue to cooperate with all international efforts to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel. She stressed the need to resume genuine, meaningful negotiations, with an agreed time frame in order to reach a two-State solution based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State

within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international agreements and the Arab Peace Initiative.

51. Mr. Çevik (Turkey), reiterating his Government's long-standing commitment to peace, stability, security and democracy in the region, with respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, said that the illegal practices of Israel and its unjust occupation of Palestinian territories fuelled hatred and radicalism, thus undermining all efforts to achieve lasting peace in both the region and the globe.

52. His delegation condemned the violations committed with impunity against the human rights of Palestinians, who were subjected to systematic humiliation, discriminatory legislation, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, detention of minors, military raids, forced displacement and house demolitions, among other crimes. Turkey further condemned collective punishment measures and acts of provocation, including the desecration of holy sites such as the Haram al-Sharif. The perpetrators of all such illegal practices must be brought to justice.

53. He expressed concern over the devastating consequences of the illegal blockade and recurrent military attacks on the Gaza Strip, where restrictions on the movement of persons and goods were severely hampering reconstruction efforts, and warned that if the current trend persisted, Gaza could become uninhabitable within five years. Turkey called for the immediate lifting of the blockade and all other restrictions on Gaza, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

54. More than merely condemning Israel for its illegal practices and occupation, the international community must renew its efforts to reach a negotiated political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-State solution and in accordance with international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, including the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

55. Mr. Forés Rodríguez (Cuba) said that the lack of cooperation by Israel impeded the Special Committee's work, which must continue until the complete termination of the Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The aggressive, colonialist policies and practices of Israel, including settlement construction and expansion, transfer of settlers onto occupied land, construction of the separation wall, destruction and confiscation of Palestinian land and property and forced displacement of Palestinians, were in deliberate contravention of United Nations resolutions and international law and constituted a direct threat to regional and international peace and security.

56. The Israeli blockade, three major wars and severe overcrowding had resulted in appalling living conditions in the Gaza Strip, where a quarter of the population lived in poverty, unemployment stood at over 40 per cent and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were in need of treatment for psychological health problems. At the current rate, with a predicted population of 2.1 million, Gaza was set to become uninhabitable by 2020. Urgent support from the international community was needed to address the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, where reports of the death or detention of innocent Palestinians were now an almost daily occurrence.

57. Cuba reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Palestinian people and called for an end to the prolonged and unlawful Israeli occupation of Palestine, the immediate and unconditional lifting of the cruel and illegal Gaza blockade and the opening of border crossings and checkpoints. Greater efforts were needed to resolve the dire situation of Palestine refugees, in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. The only way to implement a meaningful political process and bring about lasting peace was to end the colonization policy, free Palestinian prisoners and recognize the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

58. Mr. Alnaqshabandi (Iraq) deplored the continued refusal by Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, noting that this lack of cooperation was motivated by that country's indignation at the Committee's previous reports on illegal practices such as pillaging of Palestinian resources, destruction of Palestinian cultural and archaeological heritage, desecration of Islamic and Christian holy sites and violation of freedom of worship. He expressed concern over the illegal practices of Israel, which included settlement

expansion, demolition of Palestinian homes, denial of construction permits to Palestinians, the ongoing blockade against Gaza, attempts to alter the legal status and demographic composition of the Palestinian territories, the arrest of children and the ill-treatment and continued detention of Palestinians, all of which was in flagrant violation of human rights law and international law and contributed to destabilization in the region.

59. His delegation urged the international community to implement all recommendations issued by the Special Committee, in addition to other relevant international agreements, and to take appropriate measures to protect Palestinian civilians and holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Haram al-Sharif. The Security Council must take immediate action to protect Palestinians from settler violence and compel the Israeli occupying forces to abide by international law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

60. His delegation condemned the occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel since 1967 and imposition of its laws in the territory since 1981, in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which had declared the annexation of the Syrian Golan by Israel to be null and void.

61. Iraq was a staunch supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people and their claim to establish an independent State in the Palestinian territories with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

62. Mr. Wehbi (Lebanon) said that while the international community celebrated landmark events such as the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations, Israel continued its aggressive practices against the State of Palestine, clearly demonstrating that it was not part of the international consensus in favour of peace and development.

63. Every step taken by the State of Palestine to strengthen its involvement in international affairs was met with arbitrary retaliation by Israel; for example, when the State of Palestine had dared to join the International Criminal Court, Israel had withheld tax revenue that it owed to the Palestinian authorities, thus exacerbating the country's financial crisis.

64. In addition to maintaining its occupation of the State of Palestine, Israel continued to forcibly displace Palestinians and demolish their homes. According to recent reports published by various international organizations, settlement expansion in East Jerusalem had reached alarming rates in 2014; large numbers of Palestinians, including women and children, had been killed and injured by the Israeli security forces; and unless the blockade on the Gaza Strip was lifted, the area would become uninhabitable by 2020. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where arbitrary arrests and settler violence were on the rise, was reminiscent of the apartheid era. His delegation condemned attempts to monopolize holy sites in Jerusalem for a single religion and stressed the need to maintain the city's identity as a centre of worship for all faiths.

65. While the State of Palestine was endeavouring to cooperate with the United Nations, Israel was undermining prospects for a two-State solution by continuing its illegal practices. Lebanon called on the international community to work together to revitalize peace talks with a view to ending the occupation as soon as possible, in accordance with the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

66. Mr. Rim Chol Ung (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation deeply regretted the continuing human rights violations committed by Israel against the Palestinians and other Arab people. Israel had slaughtered thousands of Palestinians and had ruined their territory in a large-scale military attack in 2014 and was becoming more transparent in its efforts to crush Palestinian will for an independent State by expanding Jewish settlements. With a view to occupying Palestine permanently, Israel had increased the construction of houses in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by 40 per cent in 2014 compared with 2013 and had developed large-scale plans to build more housing and public buildings in 2015.

67. As Israel manoeuvred to expand its settlement area in the Middle East it had created some five million Palestinian refugees, while many others were living in precarious conditions and facing serious water shortages. Despite its mission to ensure international peace and security, the Security Council had taken no measures to address the crimes against humanity being committed by Israel. That was because the Security

Council was fully supported by the United States of America, which in 2014 had exercised its veto to force the rejection of a draft resolution calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Occupied Palestinian Territory by 2017, the conclusion of a peace treaty and the recognition of the Palestinian State. As a result, the peace process between Palestine and Israel had reached a deadlock despite the willingness of the Arab people to achieve peace in the Middle East.

68. The United States and Israel were acting contrary to the desire of the international community to settle the Middle East issue and the Palestinian issue in compliance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Those two countries should immediately grant both moral and material compensation to the Palestinians and other Arabs and should tackle the peace process in an honest manner. His delegation supported the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and sought a peaceful, impartial settlement of the Middle East issue for all Arab people.

69. Mr. Al-Hamadi (Qatar) expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a result of Israeli human rights abuses, which included home demolitions, forced displacement, excessive violence committed with impunity against Palestinians by Israeli citizens and security forces, the continued construction of the illegal separation wall and its isolation of Palestinian communities and the unlawful detention of Palestinians, including children. The strategy adopted by Israel of suffocating the Palestinian economy and threatening the livelihoods of Palestinian communities by cutting off their water supply was equally distressing.

70. The situation in the Gaza Strip continued to deteriorate as a result of the devastation left by the 2014 military assault and the ongoing blockade, which was severely hampering reconstruction efforts and preventing access to basic supplies.

71. The desecration by Israel of Christian and Muslim holy sites, in particular the Haram Al-Sharif, undermined prospects for a full and lasting peace in the Middle East. Qatar strongly condemned the provocative statements by Israel; policies and practices aimed at altering the demographic composition and

Arab identity of Jerusalem; attempts at spatial and temporal division of the Haram al-Sharif; attacks on Palestinian worshippers; and restrictions on their freedom of worship.

72. The illegal annexation of the Syrian Golan and exploitation of the territory's natural resources by Israel were also in blatant violation of international law and Security Council resolutions.

73. Given that such illegal practices would not cease until the root problem was tackled, his delegation called for immediate action to end the Israeli occupation and uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return. This would only be achieved through a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement based on the two-State solution and in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

74. Qatar stood in solidarity with its Palestinian and Arab brothers in their just struggle to end Israeli occupation of their land and realize their inalienable rights. It called on the international community to provide international protection to the Palestinian people and put an end to the crimes of the Israeli occupying Power, in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 904 (1994) and 605 (1987).

75. Mr. Ben Sliman (Tunisia) said that the Palestinians could not feel even a glimmer of hope about their political and economic future, or their security, while Israel continued to derail the peace process and pursue its colonialist expansion with impunity by establishing roadblocks, demolishing Palestinian homes and imposing an unprecedented blockade of Gaza. Tunisia condemned such practices by Israel, which included depriving Palestinians of their natural resources, expelling them from their lands and restricting their freedom of movement. In addition, the increasing numbers of detentions, the construction of settlements and the annexation of Palestinian territory constituted a major obstacle to peace and violated United Nations resolutions and international law.

76. Attacks and provocation against holy sites clearly reflected the objectives underlying Israeli policies and

his delegation called for an end to Israeli attempts to Judaize Jerusalem or to alter the status of the city. Attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque would only fuel tensions, and the international community must assume its responsibilities to put an end to such violence.

77. There was clearly a link between the recent surge in violence and the decades of occupation, violations of international humanitarian law and oppression of the Palestinian people. It was high time that the Security Council and the international community assumed their responsibility to protect the Palestinian population against the machinations of the occupying Power, and steps to that end must be taken before the situation deteriorated any further. The peace process must be relaunched with a view to achieving a just and sustainable peace in the Middle East on the basis of a two-State solution, but that could be achieved only through an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

78. Mr. Sharoni (Israel) said that the Government of Israel was ready to work with all those who were committed to enhancing the security, coexistence and welfare of all peoples in the region. Israel sought a lasting peace that would end the conflict once and for all and supported the vision of two States for two peoples.

79. It was therefore unfortunate that the report of the Special Committee was a one-sided distortion of the truth that ignored the reality on the ground and did nothing to promote lasting peace. Instead it merely advanced a political agenda that was designed to discredit Israel. The report failed to include the steps that Israel had taken and would continue to take to improve the well-being of the people living in the Gaza Strip under the oppressive rule of Hamas. Despite the constant threat posed to the citizens of Israel from rocket attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas, Israel had been working closely with the United Nations to facilitate reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Over 347 projects had already been approved by the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism and 141 international projects had been established outside that framework. Israel had upgraded the capacities of the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings, and almost two million tons of building materials for the Mechanism had been transferred into Gaza.

80. To improve the well-being of the people of Gaza, Israel had granted entry permits to allow for urgent

medical care and had increased the number of travel permits to the West Bank for non-urgent medical care. It had also coordinated the movement of 650 doctors and medical teams from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank for continuing education projects and conferences. All those steps would have had a significant impact on the lives of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. However, to produce better results through the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, the Palestinian Authority must take on a more substantive role. The fact that the Palestinian Authority did not assert its responsibility for the Gaza Strip raised doubts about its priorities. There must be zero tolerance for terror and violence, and the rehabilitation of Gaza must go hand in hand with the demilitarization of Hamas and the return of the Palestinian Authority to effective governance in Gaza.

81. In recent weeks Israeli citizens had been facing daily terror attacks by Palestinians and the reasons for that wave of terror were clear, as inflammatory rhetoric and lies about the Temple Mount had incited violence. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, had continually accused Israel of trying to change the status quo, but in reality Israel remained committed to the status quo. Far from endangering holy sites, it was Israel that ensured their security as it continued to protect the right of Muslims to pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the freedom of people of all faiths to visit the Temple Mount. Each year, the Temple Mount was visited by some 3.5 million Muslims compared with only 12,000 Jews. The facts spoke for themselves and it was important that those basic truths were reaffirmed by the international community in order to defuse the situation.

82. Israel had repeatedly called for the resumption of talks and had expressed its readiness to meet with Arab and Palestinian leaders in order to advance the peace process, but the Palestinian side consistently refused to return to the negotiating table. The Palestinian Authority must play a constructive role in the process by demonstrating its commitment to bilateral negotiations instead of unilateral actions. Concrete solutions could be found only through direct negotiations, and any other path would hold the region captive to the chains of resentment and hatred, and would pass on a legacy of violence and intolerance to the next generation. Israel called on its Palestinian and Arab neighbours to join it in taking concrete and courageous steps to pursue the path of peace. The cycle

of inflammatory rhetoric must end and the Fourth Committee's resources must instead be used to improve the lives of the people in the region.

83. Mr. Atlassi (Morocco) said that the report of the Special Committee had shown that Israel was persisting in its Judaization of Jerusalem and expropriation of Palestinians in violation of international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. During consultations, Member States had expressed concern about the Israeli Government's lack of cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and other relevant committees, as well as about continued settler violence, the condition of detainees, excessive use of force, the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Bedouins and herders, and excavations under and obstruction of access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem was inextricably linked to restrictions on Palestinians. Israel continued to disregard international instruments and resolutions, including Security Council and Human Rights Council resolutions.

84. As Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, Morocco was particularly concerned about Israeli efforts to change the legal status of Jerusalem, which was recognized by international resolutions as an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The temporal and spatial division of Jerusalem by Israel, and its violations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and expansion of settlements in the city of Jerusalem were moving the issue into the realm of religious conflict. The creeping Judaization of Jerusalem exacerbated the grievance felt by the Palestinians and millions of Muslims around the world, and flew in the face of efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. A recent meeting on international action on Jerusalem held by the Ministerial Contact Group of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and chaired by Morocco had issued a statement calling on the Security Council to undertake its responsibility to stop Israel from taking actions that violated the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. The path to peace lay in a return to the negotiating table within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine within the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.